

**Measuring Local Democracy
in Twenty-two Hungarian Urban Local Governments**

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Measuring Local Democracy in 22 Hungarian cities
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Local Democracy in Twenty-two Hungarian Cities

Introduction

I. Research objectives

The goal of the research project undertaken by the Eötvös Károly Public Policy Institute was to measure the democratic performance of the local governments in the twenty-two cities that have special, so-called county status within the Hungarian municipal system. The twenty-two cities do not include the metropolitan local government of Budapest because of its special size, legal status and unique internal organization. In deciding about the sample of the research, it was a crucial consideration that the twenty-two cities with county status form a relatively homogenous group in terms of size, legal status, and institutional organization within the otherwise very diverse municipal system of about 3,200 municipalities. Furthermore, these cities are the home of about one-fifth of the Hungarian population, and they also serve, to some extent, as a blueprint for other local governments in terms of democratic functioning and practices.

It has to be emphasized that measuring democratic performance as a social scientific enterprise is relatively new, and its methodology is, as of this date, still relatively undeveloped. Therefore, projects of the type carried out by the Eötvös Károly Institute are best understood as pilot projects, their findings as preliminary, and their conclusions as tentative. Nevertheless, we maintain that such pilot researches serve very important purposes. First of all, they serve the analytic interest of further developing measurement tools and methods, clarifying indicators and indices for future researches. At the end of each chapter, we summarize our conclusions concerning the possible directions of developing research methodology. But over and above these scientific interests, such pilot projects serve a number of practical goals, such as

- Drawing public interest to the actual realization of local democracy;
- Initiating public discussions as to what citizens might expect from local democracy and from their municipal governments;
- Providing systematic data for local reform initiatives;
- Providing a basis of comparison for assessing the success of reform initiatives;
- Drawing the attention of the public to the common problems of the local governments, and highlights best practices;
- Increasing awareness of the significance of democratic practices.

In our assessment, the research project carried out by the Eötvös Károly Institute and funded by the Embassy of the United States can serve well the analytic as well as practical goals listed above.

II. Methodology

In the first stage of the research project of measuring local democracy in twenty-two Hungarian city local governments, first the indicators of local democracy suitable for the specific features of the Hungarian local government structure had to be selected. The selection involved an overview of similar projects carried out by researchers in other countries¹ as well as interviews with local government officials and other local actors in one of the target cities, so that the standards used in our survey be adjusted to the particularities of the Hungarian situation and reflect the problems as perceived by the practitioners themselves. The interviews were conducted in the city of Kecskemét, with the head of the local administration (the notary), with an editor of a local daily and with representatives of voluntary organizations. Based on these interviews and the established international practice of democracy audits, the following framework was developed for the purposes of our research project.

II.1 The concept and dimensions of local democracy

Most democracy audits rely on two **fundamental principles** of democratic governance, which may be readily applied to measuring local democracy:

- a) **Popular control** of political decision making, and
- b) **Political equality** of the citizens in implementing this popular control;

From this approach, five such **democratic values** can be identified through which the two fundamental principles are realized and which can serve as evaluative criteria for assessing local democracy. These are the following:

- i. *A guaranteed framework of civil and political rights*, including equality before the law,

¹ The most important democracy audit projects are the following:
The UK Democratic Audit (http://www.fhit.org/democratic_audit/index.html),
International IDEA's programme on the "State of Democracy"
(http://www.idea.int/ideas_work/14_political_state.htm),
The SNS Democratic Audit of Sweden (www.const.sns.se/dr/english/),
The Canada Democratic Audit (www.mta.ca/faculty/arts/canadian_studies/audit.htm),
The Democratic Audit of the Institutions of European Integration (<http://www.one-europe.ac.uk/cgi-bin/esrc/world/db.cgi/proj.htm?id=29>),
The Democratic Audit of Australia (<http://democratic.audit.anu.edu.au/>)

- ii. *Open and accountable government*, including access to information about the decision makers and the decision-making process,
- iii. *Representative and responsive governance*, the distance between local decisions and local needs, etc.
- iv. *Democratic civil society*, the structure of local citizens' groups and voluntary organizations, the role of local media, etc.
- v. *Local autonomy*, or the level of financial independence that the municipalities are able to attain and maintain from the central state administration.

Accordingly, six **indices** correspond to these different dimensions of local democracy. The first and second index measures the institutional performance of local governments, while the fourth and fifth index shows the democratic contribution of the local society. The third index reveals the quality of the relationship between the local government and the local society. Finally, index 6 evaluates the joint ability of the local government and local society to attain autonomy through mobilizing the resources of the local institutions:

- 1. Lawfulness
- 2. Transparency
- 3. Representation/Responsiveness
- 4. Public Sphere
- 5. Participation
- 6. Local autonomy

II.2 Standardization of indicators

In all of the six indices, a number of different **indicators** are aggregated. Since the indicators to be aggregated in the six indices are not directly commensurable with one another, a method of **standardization** is required. The standardization method used for the purposes of this research is a comparative one that takes as its basis the average performance of the institutions to be measured. For each variable, above-the-average performances count as good, and below-the-average performances count as poor. However, a certain extent of deviation from the average (say, 20%) can indicate very different performances, depending on what is the **average deviation from the average**. More specifically, if in one specific area most local governments deviate from the average performance with about 30 to 40%, a 20% below-the-average showing is just a slightly poor performance, whereas if the average

deviation is just 5%, the same 20% deviation indicates an extremely poor showing. Therefore, the method used here will rely on the **average deviation from the average** as its standardization device.

The following example will show how this standardization method works in practice. Suppose that **electoral activity** is one of the indicators that go into the **Participation Index**. Suppose further that in this complex indicator two distinct components have to be aggregated: **voter turnout** and the **number of candidates** in electoral districts. In average, seven candidates compete in each electoral districts in the 22 cities that figure in our research, and voter turnout averages at 45,53%. How are we to assess the 40,2% voter turnout in Békéscsaba, along with the 8,8 candidates in its districts? We know that its voter turnout is poorer than the average, but the -5,3% deviation does not really tell us the significance of this deviation. By contrast, we know that the average deviation from the average voter turnout in the twenty-two cities is 5,2%. Thus, we can divide Békéscsaba's deviation (-5,3) with the average deviation (5,2), and we get such a number (-1,03) that can be aggregated with other indicators. If we go through the same operation with regard to the number of candidates, we see that the average deviation from the average number of candidates here is 1,17, and Békéscsaba's deviation is 1,9. If we divide Békéscsaba's deviation (1,9) with the average deviation (1,17), we get the figure 1,62. If we take the average of the two numbers thus gained for Békéscsaba (-1,03 and 1,62), we get an aggregated number of 0,30 for the two components as taken together, which shows Békéscsaba to be 7th among the twenty-two cities with regard to electoral activity. This is the method of standardization through which two heterogenous indicators (voter turnout and the number of candidates per electoral districts) can be aggregated into a complex indicator (electoral activity). The **Participation Index** listed above contains a number of different indicators beyond electoral activity. Here follows a sample of the indicators that go into the six indices:

II.3 Indices

1.) Lawfulness Index

- a) The number of notices of irregularity by the Administrative Offices in proportion of the total number of cases,
- b) The number of citizen complaints (in proportion of the total number of cases),
- c) The average number of days needed to hear citizen complaints
- d) The number of cases completed after the legal deadline

2.) Transparency Index

- a) The number of closed sessions of the local assembly in proportion of the total number of sessions,
- b) Media broadcast of the public sessions,
- c) Available on-line information about the functioning of the local government,
- d) The number of public hearings
- e) The frequency of press conferences held by municipal officials

3.) Representation Index

- a) Institutional links between citizens' groups and the decision-making process
- b) Personal accessibility of mayors and representatives (office hours, e-mail addresses)

4.) Public Sphere Index

- a) The number of local media outlets that covers local affairs at least once a months
- b) The ownership structure of the local media
- c) The total number of articles in local newspapers that cover local affairs
- d) The total amount of air-time of programs that cover local affairs in the local radio and television stations

5.) Participation Index

- a) Voter turnout
- b) The average number of candidates in the electoral districts
- c) Citizens' attendance at public hearings
- d) The number of local public initiatives (demonstrations, petitions, etc.)
- e) Membership of voluntary organizations as proportion of the total populace

6.) Autonomy Index

- a) The amount of local revenues (local taxes) in proportion of the total revenues of the local government
- b) The amount of discretionary spending in proportion of the whole budget
- c) The extent of central regulation of local government services

II.4 Sources of the data

The data needed for the research were drawn from various sources, such as public (local and national) databases, the official websites of the local governments, and two surveys that were constructed specifically for the purposes of this research. One survey was to be completed by local government officials, while the other by editors of the local media outlets (newspapers, radio and tv stations, internet-based newsportals). The customized survey forms containing all the detailed requests for information has been mailed to the responsible officials at the twenty-two local governments as of early November. Most local governments responded immediately, indicating their willingness to cooperate in the research. However, some of the local governments did not return their data until as late as early January, despite their legal obligation to do so, and repeated urging by the institute. One municipality, that of the city of **Nyíregyháza**, failed to provide data altogether. Therefore, Nyíregyháza had to be excluded from the research. The processing of the data available from independent databases and other sources or provided by the municipalities took place in December and January, with the final evaluations completed in February, 2004.

III. Lawfulness

Local governments and their specific agencies have both law-making and law-enforcement functions. The city councils have the power to introduce municipal statutes in legislative areas not regulated by higher-order laws, and they also serve as law-enforcement agencies in various fields. In both their law-making and law-enforcement functions, they operate under the supervision of the administrative organs of the state. The Lawfulness Index intends to capture the extent to which local government agencies abide by the rules of law issued by the national government or the local government. The following **indicators** are intended to capture the extent of lawfulness:

- Number of administrative cases completed beyond the legal deadline;
- Number of administrative decisions altered or annulled upon appeal;
- Number of notices of irregularity made by the Administrative Offices² in proportion of the total number of cases;
- Number of complaints per 10,000 inhabitants

Missing the legal deadline is entirely the local government's responsibility; therefore, it is a good indicator of institutional performance. The data do not indicate great variation from one year to another, and the range of cases completed beyond deadline extends from 0% in **Szolnok** to 16% in **Kecskemét**. The average figure for all cities is **2.81%**

Table 1

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Number of administrative cases not completed until deadline in 2001 and 2002 (%)</i>
1.	Szolnok	0,00
2.	Pécs	0,02
3.	Dunaújváros	0,02
4.	Tatabánya	0,08
5.	Szombathely	0,09
6.	Debrecen	0,14
7.	Miskolc	0,46
8.	Veszprém	0,47
9.	Salgótarján	0,48
10.	Székesfehérvár	0,78

² The Administrative Offices are the territorial agencies of the national government in charge of supervising the local governments' functioning.

11.	Békéscsaba	0,93
12.	Szekszárd	0,97
13.	Sopron	1,10
14.	Zalaegerszeg	2,76
15.	Nagykanizsa	2,80
16.	Győr	3,33
17.	Eger	4,07
18.	Szeged	4,29
19.	Hódmezővásárhely	8,83
20.	Kaposvár	11,41
21.	Kecskemét	15,92

The indicator reflecting the number of administrative cases altered or reversed upon appeal is meant to capture the lawfulness of the first-order administrative rulings. In this regard, the average performance of the local governments in this research is much better than in connection with missing the legal deadlines. The average proportion of cases altered or reversed is less than one tenth of one percent (0,09%), ranging from 0,004% in **Kaposvár** to 0,31% in **Győr**.

Table 2

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Number of altered or reversed rulings after appeal in 2001 and 2002 (‰)</i>
1.	Kaposvár	0,004
2.	Kecskemét	0,024
3.	Salgótarján	0,034
4.	Tatabánya	0,041
5.	Dunaújváros	0,046
6.	Szekszárd	0,053
7.	Pécs	0,056
8.	Békéscsaba	0,064
9.	Hódmezővásárhely	0,065
10.	Debrecen	0,069
11.	Eger	0,075
12.	Zalaegerszeg	0,084
13.	Miskolc	0,086
14.	Szeged	0,087
15.	Sopron	0,088

16.	Veszprém	0,096
17.	Szolnok	0,108
18.	Nagykanizsa	0,154
19.	Székesfehérvár	0,160
20.	Szombathely	0,287
21.	Győr	0,309

The national government exercises lawfulness supervision over the local governments through the territorial Administrative Offices. The director of the Administrative Office revises local government resolutions, decrees and statutes, the local government's organization, operation and its procedure, and it may issue notices of irregularity to the municipality, which may, in turn, appeal these notices. Our survey has found that in average, local governments receive a very low number of such notices. In particular, a number of cities (**Dunaújváros, Győr, Hódmezővásárhely, Kaposvár, Szolnok, Tatabánya, Veszprém, Zalaegerszeg**) did not receive such notices in the year 2002. the other extreme was **Salgótarján** with its 32 notices in 2002. the overall average was 1,55, and the ranking is as follows:

Table 3

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Number of irregularity notices by the Administrative Office, in % of the number of agenda entries of the city council</i>
1-8	Dunaújváros	0,00
1-8	Győr	0,00
1-8	Hódmezővásárhely	0,00
1-8	Kaposvár	0,00
1-8	Szolnok	0,00
1-8	Tatabánya	0,00
1-8	Veszprém	0,00
1-8	Zalaegerszeg	0,00
9	Eger	0,30
10	Szekszárd	0,34
11	Kecskemét	0,36
12	Pécs	0,46
13	Nagykanizsa	0,51
14	Debrecen	0,65
15	Békéscsaba	0,72

Ranking	City	<i>Number of irregularity notices by the Administrative Office, in % of the number of agenda entries of the city council</i>
16	Szombathely	1,03
17	Szeged	1,59
18	Miskolc	3,39
19	Sopron	3,53
20	Salgótarján	18,08

Complaints are filed by citizens to correct individual rights violations or harms incurred by an alleged failure or fault on the part of the local government or one of its officials. A difficulty with this data is that some of the municipalities did not provide this figure, while others indicated that the number of complaints was zero. Thus, according to the data available to us, the average number of complaints is 0,14%, or 14 complaints per 10,000 inhabitants.

Table 4

Ranking	City	<i>Number of complaints in 2001 and 2002 per 10,000 inhabitants</i>
1-2.	Szekszárd	0,00
1-2.	Szombathely	0,00
3.	Szeged	0,46
4.	Tatabánya	0,55
5.	Dunaújváros	0,93
6.	Veszprém	2,52
7.	Kecskemét	4,43
8.	Győr	5,57
9.	Eger	6,50
10.	Szolnok	8,35
11.	Békéscsaba	10,39
12.	Zalaegerszeg	10,95
13.	Miskolc	14,34
14.	Nagykanizsa	16,14
15.	Pécs	21,93
16.	Hódmezővásárhely	41,45
17.	Sopron	46,91
18.	Debrecen	62,67

III.1 Lawfulness Index

Table 5 shows the average of the above indicators, based on the procedure of standardization described in the methodological introduction above. The overall figures produced by the aggregation of the different indicators show the Lawfulness Index. It has to be borne in mind, though, that since some of the local governments provided less than exhaustive data, the validity of the figures shown here is somewhat limited.

Table 5: Lawfulness Index

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Lawfulness Index (average of standardized indicators)</i>	<i>Lawfulness Index (100-degree scale)</i>	<i>Geographic location³</i>	<i>Size⁴</i>
1.	Dunaújváros	61	100	West	small
2.	Veszprém	46	8	West	small
3.	Békéscsaba	40	85	East	small
4.	Szolnok	40	85	East	small
5.	Pécs	39	84	East	large
6.	Zalaegerszeg	35	81	West	small
7.	Miskolc	24	73	East	large
8.	Szekszárd	14	66	West	small
9.	Eger	13	65	East	small
10.	Tatabánya	7	61	West	small
11.	Szombathely	6	60	West	small
12.	Szeged	-6	51	East	large
13.	Kaposvár	-7	51	West	small
14.	Sopron	-8	50	West	small
15.	Kecskemét	-30	34	East	large
16.	Győr	-35	30	West	large
17.	Debrecen	-37	29	East	large
18.	Nagykanizsa	-57	14	West	small
19.	Hódmezővásárhely	-62	11	East	small
20.	Székesfehérvár	-67	7	West	large
21.	Salgótarján	-77	0	East	small

There is only one city (Dunaújváros) that ranked in the upper third in all of the indicators. It appears that city size have a perceptible impact on the lawfulness of a municipality's

³ East or West of the river Danube.

⁴ Small cities are those that have less than 100,000 inhabitants.

functioning: smaller cities ranked significantly better than the larger ones. Likewise, the local governments West of the Danube fared better than their Eastern counterparts.

III.2 Methodological observations about the Lawfulness Index

Further research in the area may be extended to cover the following questions:

- Is there an official whose explicit duties include the handling of citizens' complaints?
- If yes, what is the organizational position of this official?
- What are his/her powers
- How the experiences from these complaints are channelled back to the functioning of the local government?

IV. Transparency

The transparency of the functioning of local governments is the measure of the realization of at least two fundamental rights, the right to self-government and the freedom of access to information and distribution of information. Transparency means, first and foremost, the freedom of citizens to have access to information concerning the functioning of the local government, and the accountability of those in power by the opposition. Therefore, the indicators are as follows:

- The number of closed city council sessions in proportion of the total number of sessions
- The number of secret votes in proportion of the total number of votes
- Public (radio or television) broadcasting of the open sessions
- Frequency of public forums, hearings, etc.
- Frequency of press conferences
- Amount of information posted on the local government's official website

Regarding the opposition's power to hold those in power accountable:

- The range of positions (committee chairmen, vice-mayors, etc.) granted to the opposition.

As far as the proportion of closed sessions is concerned, it must be noted that as a general rule stipulated by the relevant national laws, city council sessions are open to the public. Exceptions are those sessions or agenda entries that concern sensitive personal information or the business interests of the city. Here, we discuss only the second class of exceptions, those that concern business interests. The basis of the calculation is the total number of agenda entries discussed by the council, and the proportion of entries discussed at closed sessions, rather than the total number of sessions. According to the overall average, 7% of the total number of agenda entries is heard at closed sessions.

Table 6

Ranking	City	<i>Proportion of agenda entries heard at closed sessions (2002-2003 average, %)</i>
1.	Salgótarján	0,00
2.	Kaposvár	0,16
3.	Győr	0,47
4.	Debrecen	0,81

5.	Veszprém	1,50
6.	Dunaújváros	2,16
7.	Tatabánya	2,38
8.	Békéscsaba	2,55
9.	Sopron	3,26
10.	Kecskemét	4,64
11.	Hódmezővásárhely	6,47
12.	Szolnok	6,70
13.	Szeged	7,83
14.	Zalaegerszeg	8,06
15.	Pécs	11,00
16.	Miskolc	11,02
17.	Székesfehérvár	11,96
18.	Szombathely	12,62
19.	Szekszárd	14,33
20.	Eger	16,10
21.	Nagykanizsa	23,38

According to the relevant rules of law, the city council may hold secret vote in nearly all of the cases, with a few exceptions. Should secret voting become too frequent, however, it would constitute a serious infringement of the citizens' right to know what the elected officials are doing during the decision-making process. However, our research has found that city councils do not very often resort to secret voting. The overall average indicates that city councils hold secret voting in about 1% of the total number of votes, ranging from 0% in **Nagykanizsa, Salgótarján, Szeged, Szekszárd** to 10% in **Miskolc**. The ranking is as follows:

Table 7

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Proportion of secret votes (2002-2003 average, %)</i>
1.-4.	Nagykanizsa	0,00
1.-4.	Salgótarján	0,00
1.-4.	Szeged	0,00
1.-4.	Szekszárd	0,00
5.	Kecskemét	0,09
6.	Békéscsaba	0,11
7.	Zalaegerszeg	0,11

8.	Tatabánya	0,15
9.	Kaposvár	0,16
10.	Székesfehérvár	0,20
11.	Szolnok	0,21
12.	Pécs	0,22
13.	Szombathely	0,47
14.	Győr	0,47
15.	Hódmezővásárhely	0,47
16.	Dunaújváros	0,48
17.	Veszprém	0,60
18.	Debrecen	1,95
19.	Eger	4,62
20.	Miskolc	10,17

As far as the public broadcasting of council sessions is concerned, two cities mandate in statutes such broadcasting, and further 15 cities broadcast the sessions in full length, without editing. In preparing the ranking, we used the following weighing: 3 points were given to cities with full-length, unedited broadcast, 2 points to less than full length but unedited broadcasting, and 0 point was given to cities where there was no unedited broadcasting.

Table 8

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Score</i>
1-17.	Debrecen	3
1-17.	Dunaújváros	3
1-17.	Eger	3
1-17.	Hódmezővásárhely	3
1-17.	Kaposvár	3
1-17.	Kecskemét	3
1-17.	Miskolc	3
1-17.	Nagykanizsa	3
1-17.	Pécs	3
1-17.	Sopron	3
1-17.	Szeged	3
1-17.	Székesfehérvár	3
1-17.	Szekszárd	3
1-17.	Szolnok	3
1-17.	Szombathely	3

1-17.	Tatabánya	3
1-17.	Zalaegerszeg	3
18.	Békéscsaba	2
19-21.	Győr	0
19-21.	Salgótarján	0
19-21.	Veszprém	0

According to the Local Government Act, every local government must hold at least one public hearing each year. Besides, they are free to hold other public forums to discuss specific issues in the public interest or to provide information about specific decisions or policies. Our survey examined the frequency of such forums. As far as public hearings are concerned, the cities typically hold, at best, just the legal minimum number of such events. The other forums show greater variation. Bellow, we indicate the average figures for the years 2002 and 2003.

Table 9

Ranking	City	Public hearings	Other forums	Total
1.	Salgótarján	1,0	14,0	15,0
2.	Hódmezővásárhely	1,0	11,0	12,0
3.	Szeged	1,0	10,5	11,5
4.	Eger	1,0	8,5	9,5
5.	Győr	0,5	8,0	8,5
6.	Veszprém	1,0	3,0	4,0
7.	Dunaújváros	1,0	2,5	3,5
8.	Sopron	1,0	1,5	2,5
9-10.	Kecskemét	1,5	0,0	1,5
9-10.	Zalaegerszeg	1,5	0,0	1,5
11-17.	Debrecen	1,0	0,0	1,0
11-17.	Kaposvár	1,0	0,0	1,0
11-17.	Nagykanizsa	1,0	0,0	1,0
11-17.	Székesfehérvár	1,0	0,0	1,0
11-17.	Székszárd	1,0	0,0	1,0
11-17.	Szolnok	1,0	0,0	1,0
11-17.	Szombathely	1,0	0,0	1,0
18-21.	Békéscsaba	0,5	0,0	0,5
18-21.	Miskolc	0,5	0,0	0,5
18-21.	Pécs	0,5	0,0	0,5
18-21.	Tatabánya	0,5	0,0	0,5

As far as the positions granted by the parties controlling the city council to the opposition parties are concerned, it is important to bear in mind that through the positions of committee chairman and councillor, the opposition parties can hold the majority accountable and make the proceedings of the local government more transparent. In assessing the positions granted to the opposition, we counted the chairman of the budget committee with double weight, due to its importance with respect to the transparency of the businesses conducted by the city. Interestingly, we found that with a few exceptions (**Békéscsaba, Győr, Hódmezővásárhely, Kecskemét, Szeged, Székesfehérvár és Szombathely**) the majority of the cities grant this crucial position to the opposition. This may indicate a commitment to accountability in most local governments. The overall average figure of the twenty-two cities, weighed as indicated above, is 34,4%, ranging from 0% in **Székesfehérvár** to 64,2% in **Nagykanizsa**.

Table 10

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Total number of opposition committee chairmen and councillors</i>	<i>Proportion of opposition committee chairmen and councillors (%)</i>
1.	Nagykanizsa	5	62,5
2.	Sopron	5	55,6
3.	Zalaegerszeg	5	50,0
4.	Salgótarján	5	45,5
5.	Eger	7	43,8
6.	Miskolc	7	38,9
7.	Debrecen	5	38,5
8.	Győr	6	37,5
9.	Szolnok	6	37,5
10.	Szeged	4	36,4
11.	Hódmezővásárhely	5	35,7
12.	Veszprém	5	35,7
13.	Kecskemét	4	33,3
14.	Kaposvár	3	33,3
15.	Dunaújváros	4	30,8
16.	Szekszárd	2	28,6
17.	Pécs	5	25,0
18.	Szombathely	3	25,0
19.	Tatabánya	3	20,0
20.	Békéscsaba	1	10,0
21.	Székesfehérvár	0	0,0

IV.1 Transparency Index

The overall ranking of the twenty-two cities in the Transparency Index that reflects the aggregation of the different indicators with the standardization method described above, is as follows:

Table 11 Transparency Index

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Transparency Index (average of standardized indicators)</i>	<i>Transparency Index (100-degree scale)</i>	<i>Geographic location</i>	<i>Size</i>
1.	Szeged	71	100	East	large
2.	Kaposvár	62	93	West	small
3.	Sopron	32	71	West	small
4.	Debrecen	28	68	East	large
5.	Salgótarján	19	61	East	small
6.	Győr	17	59	West	large
7.	Hódmezővásárhely	15	58	East	small
8.	Szolnok	15	58	East	small
9.	Nagykanizsa	11	55	West	small
10.	Zalaegerszeg	9	53	West	small
11.	Veszprém	8	53	West	small
12.	Kecskemét	4	50	East	large
13.	Dunaújváros	-5	43	West	small
14.	Szombathely	-6	42	West	small
15.	Pécs	-10	39	West	large
16.	Tatabánya	-16	35	West	small
17.	Eger	-27	26	East	small
18.	Székesfehérvár	-47	11	West	large
19.	Békéscsaba	-52	8	East	small
20.	Miskolc	-60	2	East	large
21.	Szekszárd	-62	0	West	small

The figures indicate that cities with less than 100,000 inhabitants tend to have more transparent local governments than their larger counterparts.

IV.2 Methodological observations about the Transparency Index

In connection with the Transparency Index, the major challenge of future researches could be not so much identifying new indicators as the fine-tuning of the current ones. For

instance, researchers are yet to establish reliable methods of capturing the **quality and content of the discussion at public hearings** and other public forums of political deliberation. Or, in connection with the positions granted to the opposition parties, future researches may include, over and above committee chairmen and councillors, the management of city-owned businesses and the chairmen of public endowments funded by the local government. Furthermore, in larger cities where multiple and often entangled economic and political interests interact to shape policy decisions, the **cohesiveness of the different party factions** in the city council can lend a measure of stability and accountability, insofar that the citizens are in a position to know which groups to attribute different decisions. The cohesiveness of party factions makes it possible to better discern the positions represented by the different political forces; by contrast, the greater is the intra-party fragmentation of votes, the more difficult it is for voters to attribute political responsibility. Voting statistics at the city council sessions may provide useful data to establish party cohesiveness.

V. Representation/Responsiveness

In the course of municipal elections, citizens want to elect representatives and mayors who adequately represent their views and interests, and we expect our elected leaders to consult people's views and problems in the period between two elections as well. The Representation Index is meant to capture the extent to which the views held within local society are transformed into policy decisions by the local government and its officials. Since it is next to impossible to continuously track the shifting views that are present in the local societies of various cities, we had to resort to indirect methods of establishing whether local decision-makers in fact seek to reflect local opinions in their decisions. Such indirect measures may be, for instance, the willingness of elected officials to systematically incorporate citizen groups and other voluntary organizations in the decision-making process, or the readiness of the local government to actively seek a better knowledge of local opinion through polls, survey, etc. other indicators include various voting statistics. The Representation Index comprises the following indicators:

- Proportionality of representation
- Representation of women in the city council
- Level of contestedness of the seats
- Proportion of non-councilmen committee members
- Incorporation of voluntary organizations in the decision-making process
- Frequency of polls and surveys

The **proportionality** indicator measures the amount of votes cast on such parties or organizations that did not gain representation in the city council. In this case, the smaller the number the better is the given city's proportionality value. The overall average figure of the twenty-two cities is 38,2%: this is the proportion of votes that did not transform into political representation. The range stretches from 27,6% in Pécs to 57,1% in Szekszárd. The ranking is as follows:

Table 12

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Votes not translated into seats (%)</i>
1.	Pécs	27,60
2.	Tatabánya	31,20

3.	Zalaegerszeg	31,22
4.	Miskolc	32,08
5.	Székesfehérvár	33,24
6.	Kaposvár	33,94
7.	Debrecen	34,00
8.	Győr	34,54
9.	Veszprém	34,71
10.	Szolnok	35,43
11.	Hódmezővásárhely	35,92
12.	Szeged	36,81
13.	Eger	39,65
14.	Salgótarján	40,00
15.	Szombathely	40,28
16.	Sopron	43,11
17.	Nagykanizsa	44,03
18.	Kecskemét	45,13
19.	Dunaújváros	47,72
20.	Békéscsaba	48,51
21.	Székesvárad	57,10

The **quality** of representation is greatly determined by the proportionality of representation of different social groups in the city council, because serious underrepresentation of certain groups may easily lead to distorted public policy choices. A variety of dimensions – ethnicity, gender or region – may be relevant here, but the constraints on the scope of this research made it possible to examine only one dimension, i.e. the representation of women in the city councils. While women form a majority of the voting-age population, it is remarkable that only 13% of the councilmembers in the twenty-two cities are women. The range stretches from an extreme 3% in Szombathely to 21% in Zalaegerszeg and Hódmezővásárhely, which is still very low. Local governments with a left-leaning coalition and those in the Western part of the country fared slightly better than the others.

Table 13

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Proportion of women</i>
1.	Zalaegerszeg	21%
2.	Hódmezővásárhely	21%
3.	Salgótarján	20%

4.	Miskolc	19%
5.	Dunaújváros	19%
6.	Szekszárd	17%
7.	Pécs	16%
8.	Debrecen	16%
9.	Sopron	15%
10.	Kecskemét	15%
11.	Szolnok	15%
12.	Kaposvár	14%
13.	Szeged	14%
14.	Győr	11%
15.	Nagykanizsa	11%
16.	Eger	8%
17.	Veszprém	7%
18.	Békéscsaba	7%
19.	Tatabánya	7%
20.	Székesfehérvár	6%
21.	Szombathely	3%

The idea behind including the contestedness of seats as an indicator of representation into the Representation Index is the assumption that if seats are closely contested, candidates will seek to construct programs that represent the views of the majority. The method of calculating contestedness was to take the average margin between the winner and the second candidate in each district of a city. The following table contains the figures drawn from the 1998 and 2002 municipal elections.

The overall average of the twenty-two cities is 15,23%. The figures also reveal that the margin has increased in all but two cities between 1998 and 2002, which may partly be attributed to the fact that by now, most of the cities became the “domain” of one or another large party.

Table 14

Ranking	City	Contestedness (1998)	Contestedness (2002)	Average (1998 and 2002, %)
1.	Békéscsaba	10,46	9,12	9,79
2.	Szekszárd	8,75	10,87	9,81
3.	Sopron	7,07	13,41	10,24
4.	Szolnok	8,78	14,59	11,69
5.	Kecskemét	12,20	11,57	11,89
6.	Eger	10,49	15,18	12,84
7.	Hódmezővásárhely	12,05	14,37	13,18
8.	Zalaegerszeg	12,91	13,44	13,21
9.	Nagykanizsa	7,06	21,35	14,21
10.	Kaposvár	11,97	18,16	15,07
11.	Debrecen	12,14	19,87	16,01
12.	Dunaújváros	14,20	17,93	16,07
13.	Szeged	14,43	17,71	16,07
14.	Salgótarján	11,99	20,77	16,38
15.	Veszprém	12,85	20,63	16,74
16.	Szombathely	16,08	17,45	16,77
17.	Győr	14,15	20,25	17,20
18.	Székesfehérvár	8,91	26,55	17,73
19.	Tatabánya	12,51	28,77	20,64
20.	Miskolc	10,64	32,06	21,35
21.	Pécs	13,52	32,46	22,99

The practice of including so-called external members in the local government's decision-making process through membership in the standing committees was intended to enhance the representation of expert views as well as popular concerns in the representative bodies. This practice may directly increase representation; however, a measure of caution is in order here, because it is common knowledge that in many local governments external membership is allocated on the basis of party allegiances. (This practice is explicitly formulated in Miskolc and Tatabánya). The overall percentage of the so-called external members in proportion of the total number of representatives is 39,4%, ranging from 0% in Pécs to 46,4% in Kaposvár.

Table 15

Ranking	City	<i>Number of external members in proportion of all committee members (%)</i>
1.	Kaposvár	46,4
2.	Hódmezővásárhely	44,9
3.	Salgótarján	44,4
4.	Miskolc	44,3
5.	Szombathely	44,1
6.	Békéscsaba	43,8
7.	Nagykanizsa	43,8
8.	Székesfehérvár	43,6
9.	Tatabánya	43,1
10.	Dunaújváros	43,0
11.	Kecskemét	42,6
12.	Zalaegerszeg	42,5
13.	Eger	41,1
14.	Sopron	40,4
15.	Szolnok	40,3
16.	Győr	38,5
17.	Debrecen	38,1
18.	Veszprém	37,7
19.	Szeged	35,3
20.	Szekszárd	30,3
21.	Pécs	0,0

The Local Government Act makes it mandatory for local governments to sustain systematic relations with the citizens' voluntary organizations, and to draw them into the decision-making process. The different local governments established various forms of links to substantiate this obligation, which is not very easy to capture through any single indicator. For the purposes of this research, we have identified four main aspects to assess the quality of the relations between a local governments and the citizens' organizations in place:

- Do citizens' organizations have the possibility to file proposals for the annual agenda of the local government, or to make motions at the sessions of the city council?
- To what extent might citizens' organizations be represented and participate in the sessions of the city council?
- What is the rank of the local government official in charge of the relations with citizens' organizations

- To what extent citizens' might organizations contribute to the preparation of the proposals presented before the city council?

The figures provided for these four aspects are weighed in accordance with the scope and extent of the rights granted to the voluntary organizations. The ranking of the cities is as follows:

Table 16

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Motions to the agenda</i>	<i>Participation in the city council</i>	<i>Rank of contact person</i>	<i>Preparation of proposals</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	Győr	2	3	3	3	11
2.-3.	Szolnok	2	3	1	3	9
2.-3.	Zalaegerszeg	2	2	2	3	9
4.-9.	Hódmezővásárhely	1	2	2	2	7
4.-9.	Nagykanizsa	2	2	2	1	7
4.-9.	Pécs	3	2	1	1	7
4.-9.	Sopron	1	3	1	2	7
4.-9.	Székesfehérvár	3	2	1	1	7
4.-9.	Szombathely	3	1	2	1	7
10.-16.	Békéscsaba	1	2	1	2	6
10.-16.	Eger	1	1	1	3	6
10.-16.	Kaposvár	1	1	3	1	6
10.-16.	Kecskemét	1	1	3	1	6
10.-16.	Miskolc	1	1	2	2	6
10.-16.	Szekszárd	1	1	3	1	6
10.-16.	Tatabánya	2	1	2	1	6
17.-20.	Debrecen	1	2	1	1	5
17.-20.	Salgótarján	1	1	2	1	5
17.-20.	Szeged	1	2	1	1	5
17.-20.	Veszprém	1	1	2	1	5
21.	Dunaújváros	1	1	1	1	4

As far as the polls and surveys conducted by the local governments are concerned, the research revealed very limited such efforts on the part of the municipalities. In all, four cities have conducted opinion polls in the last two years, and nine cities have conducted surveys to measure customer satisfaction with the local administrative offices. In addition, a majority of the cities have some kind of quality insurance system in place. In our calculations, opinion polls were counted with double weight. The ranking is as follows:

Table 17

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Number of opinion polls</i>	<i>Number of consumer satisfaction surveys</i>	<i>Weighed indicator</i>
1.	Dunaújváros	0	6	6
2.	Győr	0	4	4
3.-6.	Békéscsaba	1	1	3
3.-6.	Hódmezővásárhely	1	1	3
3.-6.	Kecskemét	0	3	3
3.-6.	Pécs	1	1	3
7.-8.	Székesfehérvár	1	0	2
7.-8.	Zalaegerszeg	0	2	2
9.-10.	Kaposvár	0	1	1
9.-10.	Sopron	0	1	1
11.-21.	Debrecen	0	0	0
11.-21.	Eger	0	0	0
11.-21.	Miskolc	0	0	0
11.-21.	Nagykanizsa	0	0	0
11.-21.	Salgótarján	0	0	0
11.-21.	Szeged	0	0	0
11.-21.	Szekszárd	0	0	0
11.-21.	Szolnok	0	0	0
11.-21.	Szombathely	0	0	0
11.-21.	Tatabánya	0	0	0
11.-21.	Veszprém	0	0	0

V.1 Representation Index

Based on these five indicators, it was possible to get, through aggregation, the overall Representation Index ranking of the twenty-two cities. The first place of Győr is attributable to its efforts to learn more about local opinions. The second place of Zalaegerszeg is due to its consistently good ranking through all five indicators. It must be noted, however, that the Representation Index combines facts that are within the local governments' power to influence (external members, polls, contact with citizens' groups) with such circumstances that are entirely beyond its power (proportionality, contestedness). Thus, it could occur that even though Székesfehérvár made efforts to strengthen representation, the circumstances of its electoral politics made it one of the laggards in overall representation. Therefore,

methodologically it may be favorable to divide this index into the separate indices of **representation** proper (consisting of the indicators of proportionality and contestedness) and of **responsiveness** (consisting of the other indicators that reflect the local governments' efforts to track and respond to local opinion). At the end of this study, in drawing the overall ranking of the twenty-two cities, we have separated those dimensions of local democracy that can be directly influenced by the local government, from the ones that are, to some extent, externally determined circumstances from the point of view of the local governments. In this separation, the different components of the Representation Index fall on different sides of this division (see Summaries I and II).

Table 18 Representation Index

<i>Ran king</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Representation Index (average of standardized indicators)</i>	<i>Representation Index (100-degree scale)</i>	<i>Geographic location</i>	<i>Size</i>
1.	Győr	85	100	West	large
2.	Zalaegerszeg	76	94	West	small
3.	Hódmezővásárhely	54	80	East	small
4.	Szolnok	31	65	East	small
5.	Békéscsaba	22	59	East	small
6.	Kecskemét	18	56	East	large
7.	Sopron	18	56	West	small
8.	Kaposvár	17	56	West	small
9.	Szekszárd	3	46	West	small
10.	Szombathely	0	44	West	small
11.	Dunaújváros	-1	43	West	small
12.	Eger	-9	38	East	small
13.	Nagykanizsa	-11	37	West	small
14.	Tatabánya	-23	29	East	small
15.	Miskolc	-27	26	East	large
16.	Debrecen	-29	25	East	large
17.	Salgótarján	-35	21	East	small
18.	Veszprém	-36	21	West	small
19.	Szeged	-43	16	East	large
20.	Székesfehérvár	-44	15	West	large
21.	Pécs	-67	0	West	large

Looking at the overall ranking in the Representation Index, we find that Representation – or at least those components of it that can be influenced by the decision-makers – correlates strongly with city size but not with geographic location. Thus, cities with less than 100,000 inhabitants make markedly larger efforts to make policy represent local opinion. The smaller cities have an average of 49 points, compared with the 34 points achieved by the larger ones.

V.2 Methodological observations about the Representation Index

In future researches, an indicator of local political autonomy may be developed to capture the dependence or lack thereof of local party chapters from the national party organizations in selecting candidates, making coalitions and deciding about local policy. Experience shows that conflicts are not infrequent between local party leaders and national party bodies in these matters, and it may be argued that abiding by the demands of national politics limits the local leaders ability to be responsive to local demands. However, tracking dependence on national party organizations require extensive field-research and interviews with local leaders. Likewise, extensive fieldwork may shed more light on the level of involvement of local citizens' organizations in electoral politics (endorsement, campaigning, etc.).

VI. Public Sphere

By public sphere we mean a domain of discussing common issues that is accessible to everyone. The most important institutions of the public sphere are the printed and electronic media. While the Transparency Index discussed in Chapter 2 captures the local governments' readiness and willingness to make their activities known or knowable to all (and of course part of this happens through the various printed and electronic media), the Public Sphere Index is meant to measure the local society's capacity to sustain a pluralist media environment that covers local political and social issues. The contribution of a strong pluralist public sphere to democracy takes at least three distinct yet interrelated forms:

- It enables citizens to make informed and considered choices when they elect local decision-makers or take part in referenda, etc.
- The information uncovered and distributed by the media makes it possible for citizens to hold their elected leaders accountable for their actions and decisions.
- A pluralist media environment presses politicians as well as citizens to formulate their views more precisely and with better arguments in response to the counterarguments of those holding opposing views. This contributes to the evolution of views of elected leaders as well as of citizens and also to a better understanding of the problems faced by the local community.

The media environment is capable of performing all these functions only if it is financially feasible and editorially independent. Therefore, the Public Sphere Index attempts to capture the characteristic features of the local media environment, because this is the one dimension of the public sphere that may be most reliably measured. In the course of this inquiry, we restricted the survey to those media outlets that provide substantial coverage of political and social issues, and we excluded media directed exclusively (or predominantly) at entertainment. Beyond the conventional media, we included internet-based newsproviders as well.

We assessed the different media outlets according to the quality and extent of their coverage of political and social issues. We have established and examined eight typical categories of news content, of which four concerns the local governments:

- Publishing the agenda of the city council
- Reporting on the proceedings of the city council
- Reporting on the decisions made by the local government

- Interviews with local decisionmakers

VI.1 Public Sphere Index

The further categories of news content include reporting on opposing views about different issues, reporting on local events and issues independent of the proceedings of the local government, and providing forum for citizens' views to be heard. In every category, each media outlet could be given 0, 1 or 2 points, depending on the quantity and quality of its coverage. Thus, the maximum to be attained by any newsprovider would be 16 points. The ranking of the cities was established by aggregating the points achieved by the different local media outlets operating in it. However, if more than one media outlets were owned by the same owner, only the one with highest score was included in full, while the results of the others were included only with a weighing of 0.5. The ranking of the cities is as follows:

Table 19

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Public Sphere Index</i>	<i>Standardized Index of Public Sphere</i>	<i>Geographic location</i>	<i>Size</i>
1.	Debrecen	53,0	100	East	large
2.	Tatabánya	51,0	91	West	small
3.	Sopron	48,0	80	West	small
4.	Szeged	42,5	60	East	large
5.	Veszprém	42,0	60	West	small
6.	Nagykanizsa	39,0	49	West	small
7.	Pécs	38,5	46	West	large
8.	Békéscsaba	37,0	40	East	small
9.	Zalaegerszeg	37,0	40	West	small
10.	Székesfehérvár	36,5	37	West	large
11.	Kecskemét	36,0	37	East	large
12.	Dunaújváros	35,5	34	West	small
13.	Győr	35,0	31	West	large
14.	Hódmezővásárhely	35,0	31	East	small
15.	Szolnok	35,0	31	East	small
16.	Szombathely	33,0	26	West	small
17.	Miskolc	32,0	20	East	large
18.	Salgótarján	31,5	20	East	small
19.	Kaposvár	29,5	11	West	small
20.	Szekszárd	26,5	0	West	small
21.	Eger	26,0	0	East	small

Taking a closer look at the local media environments reveals the following tendencies. The leading source of news in each city is typically still one large daily newspaper with countywide circulation. Above this, there are usually only weekly papers. Television stations are usually owned by the local governments, and it is rare for a city to have more than one television station. By contrast, most radio stations are privately owned; however, they provide significantly less political and social news content than the televisions. A welcome tendency is the strengthening of internet-based newsportals that, despite their as yet small readership, prove an increasingly important factor of the local public sphere.

Unsurprisingly, we found that the somewhat wealthier Western cities have a slightly richer media market than their Eastern counterparts. Even less surprising was the finding that the structure of the media environment strongly correlates with city size. Cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants scored 47, as compared with the figure of 37 achieved by the smaller cities.

Methodological observations about the Public Sphere Index

An important obstacle of getting reliable information about local media markets is the absence of acknowledged audits of circulation and viewership of the different media outlets. Therefore, in our figures large dailies figure with the same weight as relatively fresh internet newsportals. A significant improvement of methodology could be secured if somehow reliable figures could be obtained about the actual impact of these different media.

VII. Participation Index

The Participation Index is intended to measure the extent of involvement by the citizens in the affairs of their local communities. Voter turnout and the number of candidates per voting districts is just one dimension of participation. Equally important is the number of nonprofit voluntary organizations in proportion of the size of the local population, or the number of volunteers in electoral campaigns or the circulation of newspapers with extensive political coverage compared, once again, to the size of the population. However, as there are no reliable data on the last two components, the Participation Index is restricted to the following indicators:

- Voter turnout
- Number of candidates per districts
- Structure of the local civil society

In connection with voter turnout, we included in the calculation, beyond the figures of the 1998 and 2002 municipal elections, the data of the 1998 and 2002 national legislative elections as well (but only in the first round of the vote). Both reflect the political activity of the local society, but since turnout at the municipal elections is related to the willingness of citizens to take part in local affairs, those figures were weighed twice as much as turnout at the national elections. Based on this calculation, the ranking is as follows:

Table 20

Ranking	City	Average turnout at municipal elections (%)	Average turnout at national legislative elections (%)	Weighed average (%)
1.	Hódmezővásárhely	50,73	63,26	55,37
2.	Győr	46,75	68,57	54,28
3.	Veszprém	45,04	70,90	54,00
4.	Szekszárd	44,54	69,51	53,74
5.	Sopron	44,63	70,35	53,39
6.	Székesfehérvár	46,38	67,14	53,12
7.	Szombathely	45,43	66,00	52,90
8.	Eger	43,78	69,73	52,56
9.	Szolnok	44,21	69,49	52,47
10.	Kaposvár	45,89	64,92	52,41
11.	Zalaegerszeg	41,50	68,74	50,87
12.	Pécs	39,85	66,78	49,04

13.	Miskolc	40,54	65,09	48,97
14.	Salgótarján	40,62	63,55	48,42
15.	Debrecen	40,29	62,17	47,89
16.	Békéscsaba	38,54	63,44	47,30
17.	Tatabánya	38,46	62,13	46,60
18.	Szeged	37,13	63,96	46,30
19.	Dunaújváros	36,86	63,61	45,94
20.	Nagykanizsa	35,93	63,39	45,42
21.	Kecskemét	35,79	60,70	44,77

While voter turnout indicates the citizens' willingness to participate in local affairs in general, the number of candidates per districts sheds light on the activity of those who are already involved in one way or another, and also on the fragmentation of the local party structure. One gets the figure for each city by dividing the overall number of candidates with the number of voting district in the city. Here, of course, only the figures of the 1998 and 2002 municipal elections were taken into account. The ranking is as follows:

Table 21

Ranking	City	<i>Average number of candidates per district (1998)</i>	<i>Average number of candidates per district (2002)</i>	<i>Average of the two elections</i>
1.	Kecskemét	9,42	8,83	9,13
2.	Dunaújváros	10,07	8,00	9,03
3.	Tatabánya	9,94	7,25	8,59
4.	Győr	9,95	7,14	8,55
5.	Debrecen	8,63	8,10	8,37
6.	Nagykanizsa	8,60	7,73	8,17
7.	Szeged	9,08	7,08	8,08
8.	Miskolc	8,48	7,56	8,02
9.	Pécs	7,48	8,25	7,87
10.	Békéscsaba	6,88	8,81	7,84
11.	Eger	7,60	6,87	7,23
12.	Szombathely	6,71	6,82	6,76
13.	Kaposvár	7,44	5,94	6,69
14.	Szolnok	6,65	6,56	6,60
15.	Szekszárd	6,14	6,29	6,21
16.	Salgótarján	6,00	6,36	6,18
17.	Hódmezővásárhely	7,14	5,00	6,07

18.	Székesfehérvár	6,26	5,58	5,92
19.	Zalaegerszeg	5,81	5,69	5,75
20.	Veszprém	6,38	5,07	5,72
21.	Sopron	5,60	5,33	5,47

The idea behind including the structure of civil society in this index is the potential political impact of voluntary organizations. It is an established fact that horizontally organized societies are more capable to organize politically as well, and to influence policy decisions. Therefore, the density of voluntary organizations, including the patently nonpolitical ones, indirectly indicates the capacity of the local society to politically mobilize itself. The table bellow shows the number of voluntary nonprofit organizations per 1000 persons.

Table 22

Ranking	City	<i>Nonprofit organizations per 1000 persons</i>
1.	Veszprém	12,94
2.	Szekszárd	11,99
3.	Kaposvár	11,23
4.	Eger	11,17
5.	Zalaegerszeg	10,59
6.	Salgótarján	9,51
7.	Szolnok	9,15
8.	Békéscsaba	8,78
9.	Pécs	8,64
10.	Szombathely	8,37
11.	Miskolc	8,21
12.	Debrecen	8,00
13.	Kecskemét	7,72
14.	Szeged	7,70
15.	Győr	7,68
16.	Sopron	7,66
17.	Nagykanizsa	6,92
18.	Székesfehérvár	6,59
19.	Tatabánya	6,49
20.	Hódmezővásárhely	5,92
21.	Dunaújváros	4,46

VII.1 Participation Index

The three indicators included in the Participation Index (voter turnout, number of candidates per district, civil society) reflect the performance of the community of citizens in a given city rather than the performance of the city council or the local policy makers. Of course, the decisions and actions of the latter may influence the former, but if there is indeed such an indirect impact, it is impossible to track it within such a short period of time that was covered in this research. At any rate, it is hard to see how that impact could be reliably measured even in the long run.

The Participation Index shows very little variation with the size of a city, and it is only slightly more correlated with geographic location (50 points average in the Western cities as compared with 45 points in the Eastern ones).

Table 23: Participation Index

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Participation Index (average of standardized indicators)</i>	<i>Participation Index (100- degree scale)</i>	<i>Geographic location</i>	<i>Size</i>
1.	Eger	63	100	East	small
2.	Veszprém	63	100	West	small
3.	Győr	62	99	West	large
4.	Szekszárd	60	98	West	small
5.	Kaposvár	48	87	West	small
6.	Szolnok	13	59	East	small
7.	Szombathely	9	55	West	small
8.	Pécs	6	53	West	large
9.	Miskolc	3	50	East	large
10.	Debrecen	-1	47	East	large
11.	Zalaegerszeg	-4	45	West	small
12.	Békéscsaba	-9	40	East	small
13.	Kecskemét	-15	36	East	large
14.	Hódmezővásárhely	-25	27	East	small
15.	Szeged	-30	23	East	large
16.	Tatabánya	-31	22	West	small
17.	Salgótarján	-33	21	East	small
18.	Sopron	-34	20	West	small
19.	Székesfehérvár	-41	14	West	large
20.	Nagykanizsa	-48	8	West	small
21.	Dunaújváros	-58	0	West	small

VII.2 Methodological observations about the Participation Index

As indicated above, the number of volunteers during the electoral campaigns, the size of the audience at campaign rallies and other events, may provide useful information about the participation of the local society. Likewise, the registered membership of local party chapters as well as of the voluntary organizations is certainly very significant. However, these data are very difficult to obtain and in many cases may require extended fieldwork. An even more complicated task could be capturing, over and above the sheer numbers, the quality of participation in local affairs. One such indicator may be the amount of information requests filed by citizens to the local governments under Hungary's rather radical Freedom of Information Act of 1992. In fact, we tried to obtain these figures from the city administrations, but no reliable data were forthcoming.

VIII. Summary I: Local Government Democracy Performance

Lawfulness, transparency and the **responsiveness** segment of the Representation Index are those dimensions of local democracy that can be directly affected by the decisions and actions of the local decision-makers and elected officials. Therefore, the democratic performance of the local governments of the twenty-two cities are best captured in these dimensions, as distinct from the dimensions of **representation**, the **public sphere** and **participation** that reveal the democratic characteristics of the local society rather than those of the local government. The indicators making up the Lawfulness Index, the Transparency Index, and the responsiveness segment of the Representation Index together constitute the **Democratic Performance Index (DPI)**, measuring the overall democratic inclinations and practices of the local leaders and officials. The other remaining indicators make up the **Democratic Society Index (DSI)**. In Summary I, we discuss the DPI ranking of the twenty-two cities. The following table shows the democratic performance of the local governments:

Table 24

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Democratic Performance Index</i>
1.	Zalaegerszeg	60
2.	Győr	60
3.	Szolnok	57
4.	Dunaújváros	57
5.	Kaposvár	55
6.	Sopron	53
7.	Békéscsaba	52
8.	Kecskemét	52
9.	Hódmezővásárhely	51
10.	Szombathely	51
11.	Pécs	50
12.	Veszprém	50
13.	Szeged	49
14.	Nagykanizsa	49
15.	Tatabánya	48
16.	Miskolc	48
17.	Eger	46

18.	Salgótarján	45
19.	Debrecen	45
20.	Székesfehérvár	44
21.	Székszárd	38

A cursory glance at the table shows a striking dominance of Western cities at the top of the table: only one in the top six cities (Szolnok) is located East of the Danube. However, since the bottom of the table is also occupied by western cities, the overall difference between the democratic performance of the local governments east and west of the Danube is negligible. In all, city size makes little difference in the overall democratic performance of the local governments. As noted above, smaller cities tend to perform notably better in the Lawfulness Index, but this difference is mostly offset by the better showing of larger cities in transparency.

An interesting issue might be the correlation of democratic performance with the political orientation of the coalitions that govern the different cities. Here, it must be kept in mind that while most of the data comes from the years 2001 and 2002, some of the figures refer to 2003, and that the municipal elections at the end of 2002 brought changes in the leadership of a number of the twenty-two cities examined here. Therefore, in assessing this issue, some of the time one has to consider the pre-2002 leadership, while at other times the current ones. With those caveats, the findings are as follows. The indicators within the Lawfulness Index refer to 2001 and 2002, and considering the pre-2002 leadership of the 22 cities we find that left-leaning coalitions have a 10-point lead in this index. By contrast, right-leaning cities have a 6- to 7-point lead in transparency and responsiveness. Based on the current distribution of power, right-leaning cities have a 3-point edge in the overall Democratic Performance Index; however, if the Lawfulness Index is calculated with the then-existing distribution of power, the overall difference shrinks to less than 2 points.

Table 25: Democratic Performance Index

<i>Average score</i>		<i>Lawfulness Index</i>	<i>Transparency Index</i>	<i>Responsiveness Index</i>	<i>DPI</i>
Location	<i>West of Danube (N=12)</i>	51	50	52	51
	<i>East of Danube (N=9)</i>	50	51	48	50
Size	<i>Smaller (N=14)</i>	52	50	50	51
	<i>Larger (N=7)</i>	48	51	50	50

<i>Current coalition</i>	<i>Left</i> (N=16)	52	49	49	50
	<i>Right</i> (N=5)	47	55	56	53
<i>Pre-2002 coalition</i>	<i>Left</i> (N=10)	56	48	50	51
	<i>Right</i> (N=11)	46	53	50	50

IX. Summary II: Democratic Society

The Democratic Society Index consists of the representation portion of the Representation Index, the Public Sphere Index, and the Participation Index. Since the Public Sphere Index consists of a single indicator, the often huge differences are not blunted by the presence of other indicators. Therefore, this single index has a larger impact on the overall DSI than the others. Debrecen's outstanding position is due to this factor. The ranking of the cities is as follows:

Table 26

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Democratic Society Index</i>
1.	Debrecen	68
2.	Zalaegerszeg	65
3.	Veszprém	65
4.	Sopron	64
5.	Pécs	59
6.	Tatabánya	58
7.	Hódmezővásárhely	57
8.	Kaposvár	55
9.	Szolnok	55
10.	Szeged	53
11.	Miskolc	49
12.	Győr	49
13.	Székesfehérvár	46
14.	Salgótarján	45
15.	Székszárd	41
16.	Kecskemét	40
17.	Eger	38
18.	Nagykanizsa	38
19.	Szombathely	38
20.	Békéscsaba	34
21.	Dunaújváros	31

As far as geographic location is concerned, it is only in the size of the media market that the wealthier Western part of the country has some notable advantage. City size, too,

correlates with the size of the media market, and since the larger cities attained a better average score in representation, it follows that larger-than-100, 000 cities fared better overall in the DSI. As for political orientation, the societies of the currently right-leaning cities scored better in all three indices as well as in the overall DSI.

Table 27: Democratic Society Index

<i>Average score</i>		<i>Representation Index</i>	<i>Public Sphere Index</i>	<i>Participation Index</i>	<i>Demokratikus Társadalom Index</i>
Geographic location	<i>West of Danube (N=12)</i>	48	52	52	51
	<i>East of Danube (N=9)</i>	53	47	47	49
Size	<i>Small (N=14)</i>	47	47	54	49
	<i>Large (N=7)</i>	57	56	43	52
Governing coalition	<i>Left (N=16)</i>	46	49	48	48
	<i>Right (N=5)</i>	63	52	56	57

X. Summary III: Overall Local Democracy

Finally, the Local Democracy Index (LDI) summarizes the overall state of local democracy in the twenty-two cities. We also assessed local democracy according to geographic location, city size and political orientation of the ruling coalitions. The position of the cities in the six indices (the Representation Index is divided here into Representation proper and Responsiveness) is as follows:

Table 28: Final ranking in six indices

<i>City</i>	<i>Lawfulness Index</i>	<i>Transparency Index</i>	<i>Representation</i>		<i>Public Sphere Index</i>	<i>Participation Index</i>
			<i>Responsiveness Index</i>	<i>Representation Index</i>		
Békéscsaba	60	37	59	17	50	36
Debrecen	45	56	35	64	100	41
Dunaújváros	65	49	57	46	44	3
Eger	53	43	42	34	11	69
Győr	45	55	79	51	43	52
Hódmezővásárhely	35	54	65	72	43	57
Kaposvár	49	64	52	60	23	84
Kecskemét	47	51	58	42	46	32
Miskolc	56	42	45	73	32	42
Nagykanizsa	41	55	50	34	57	24
Pécs	59	48	44	76	55	46
Salgótarján	41	54	40	62	30	43
Sopron	48	58	52	46	88	58
Szeged	49	68	32	54	69	36
Székesfehérvár	33	40	59	42	48	48
Szekszárd	48	34	33	33	13	78
Szolnok	60	54	57	32	43	64
Szombathely	54	48	50	50	35	55
Tatabánya	54	46	44	47	99	28
Veszprém	62	53	34	42	67	86
Zalaegerszeg	59	52	69	81	50	66

The Local Democracy Index is produced by the mean of the six indices. Thus, the final overall ranking of the cities in the LDI is the following:

Table 29: Local Democracy Index

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Local Democracy Index</i>
1.	Zalaegerszeg	63
2.	Sopron	58
3.	Veszprém	57
4.	Debrecen	57
5.	Szolnok	56
6.	Kaposvár	55
7.	Pécs	54
8.	Hódmezővásárhely	54
9.	Győr	54
10.	Tatabánya	53
11.	Szeged	51
12.	Miskolc	48
13.	Kecskemét	46
14.	Salgótarján	45
15.	Székesfehérvár	45
16.	Szombathely	44
17.	Dunaújváros	44
18.	Nagykanizsa	43
19.	Békéscsaba	43
20.	Eger	42
21.	Székszárd	40

It is to be noticed that the distribution of the cities in the LDI is confined to a relatively narrow segment, between 63 points in Sopron and 40 points in Székszárd. It may be worthwhile at this point to compare the two major constituents of the LDI, i.e. the Democratic Performance Index and the Democratic Society Index, to see if there is any significant correlation between the democratic attitudes and practices to be found in local communities and the democratic performance of the elected officials in the same community.

Table 30: DPI and LSI

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Democratic Performance Index</i>	<i>Ranking</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Democratic Society Index</i>
1.	Zalaegerszeg	60	1.	Debrecen	68
2.	Győr	60	2.	Zalaegerszeg	66
3.	Szolnok	57	3.	Veszprém	65
4.	Dunaújváros	57	4.	Sopron	64
5.	Kaposvár	55	5.	Pécs	59
6.	Sopron	53	6.	Tatabánya	58
7.	Békéscsaba	52	7.	Hódmezővásárhely	57
8.	Kecskemét	52	8.	Kaposvár	55
9.	Hódmezővásárhely	51	9.	Szeged	53
10.	Szombathely	51	10.	Miskolc	49
11.	Pécs	50	11.	Győr	49
12.	Veszprém	50	12.	Szombathely	47
13.	Szeged	49	13.	Szolnok	46
14.	Nagykanizsa	49	14.	Székesfehérvár	46
15.	Tatabánya	48	15.	Salgótarján	45
16.	Miskolc	48	16.	Szekszárd	41
17.	Eger	46	17.	Kecskemét	40
18.	Salgótarján	45	18.	Eger	38
19.	Debrecen	45	19.	Nagykanizsa	38
20.	Székesfehérvár	44	20.	Békéscsaba	34
21.	Szekszárd	38	21.	Dunaújváros	31

If we compare the rankings according to democratic performance and according to the democratic practices of the local society, we find surprisingly little correlation between the two rankings. There are only four cities (Zalaegerszeg, Kaposvár, Sopron és Hódmezővásárhely) to make it to the top ten in both rankings, and there are some striking discrepancies. Debrecen, for instance, come in the top of the Democratic Society Index and ranks 19th of 22 in the DPI. By contrast, Dunaújváros ranks 21nd in the DSI and comes in 4th in the DPI. While the local societies tend to be more democratic in the Western part of the country than in the Eastern and middle regions, the democratic performance of the respective local governments does not significantly differ. Likewise, city size correlates with DSI but not with DPI: local society in smaller cities tends to be more democratic, but just by a small margin. The most significant correlation is to be found with the political orientation of the

ruling coalitions. Cities with right-leaning coalitions (as of 2003) fared better both in the DSI and in the DPI.

Table 31

<i>Average score</i>		<i>Democratic Performance Index</i>	<i>Democratic Society Index</i>	<i>Local Democracy Index</i>
Geographic Location	<i>West of Danube (N=12)</i>	51	51	51
	<i>East of Danube (N=9)</i>	50	49	49
Size	<i>Small (N=14)</i>	51	49	50
	<i>Large (N=7)</i>	50	52	51
Governing Coalition (present)	<i>Left (N=16)</i>	50	48	49
	<i>Right (N=5)</i>	53	57	55
Pre-2002 coalition	<i>Left (N=10)</i>	51	48	50
	<i>Right (N=11)</i>	50	51	51

A number of precautionary remarks are in order here, to avoid unfounded conclusions. First of all, the left- or right-orientation of different cities does not seem to correlate significantly either with city size or geographic locations. In other words, in detecting a moderate amount of correlation between local democracy and political orientation, it is likely that the correlation is not the effect of some other factor. On the other hand, it is far from clear what kind of mechanism is operating here. Furthermore, the correlation discerned here should not be generalized, because the twenty-two cities covered in this research are not representative of the totality of Hungarian local governments.

What might be the explanation of the better showing of right-leaning cities in the Local Democracy Index? The findings of this research suggest no obvious answer. Even to begin to develop a hypothesis, one has to proceed with great caution. First of all, due to their far larger numbers (16), left-leaning cities constitute a much more heterogeneous group than the right-leaning ones (5). Second, it has to be considered that in the 2002 municipal elections, six cities went from right to left, while no city in this sample went from left to right. Therefore, if we assume that past performance affects the voters' decisions, it may be reasonable to infer that the left-wing landslide of 2002 has been survived by only those right-led cities that showed an above-the-average overall performance, components of which may be such things as responsiveness, transparency, etc. that favorably affect a city's ranking in the DPI and LDI. Therefore, the five remaining right-led cities are among the most

democratic ones overall, and while there are certainly five comparably democratic cities among the left-governed ones, the ones with mediocre and poor ranking make the average weaker on the left. In fact, the average score of the top five left-governed cities in the Local Democracy Index is marginally higher (55,8) than the average score of the five right-governed cities (55). This hypothesis is supported by the fact that considering the pre-2002 situation, the difference between left- and right-leaning cities all but disappears. While this hypothesis is very difficult to test, it does not explain why the right-wing cities fare better in the Democratic Society Index as well. In any case, this hypothesis is highly speculative and must be tested in further research.

XI. Methodological Limitations and Conclusions

The validity of the observations on local democracy yielded by this research is limited by a number of circumstances. First of all, the innovative character of the project made it necessary for the authors to resort to highly creative and therefore untested methods, the validity and reliability of which may not be borne out in future researches. The second general constraint was the limited amount of time that had been available for the research. Due to this circumstance, the gathering and processing of the information took place almost simultaneously, making the assessment of deeper correlations and evaluative analysis impossible.

In selecting the different indicators, one has to take into account a variety of criteria, such as

- Relevance
- Reliability
- Variation
- Accessibility

The selection of the indicators took place in advance, with very limited discussion with practitioners and local government officials. Therefore, even though the authors are certain that the selected indicators are **relevant** from the point of view of democracy, the assessment of our findings by practitioners and officials may greatly benefit future researches and contribute to their success. Some of the figures in this study are perfectly **reliable**, such as voting statistics, for instance. Others, however, may require further scrutiny that was impossible to exercise in the current research, due to the time constraint. It has to be stated, therefore, that **the authors could not check the validity of the data provided by the local governments**. A number of very promising indicators had to be removed from the analysis, often in the last moment, because they showed no **variation** between the different cities. More extensive data gathering may help us to use these indicators in future researches. Often the very prosaic condition of **accessibility** determined which indicators would be used in our final assessment. The requirements of reliability and relevance sometimes had to be subordinated to the demand of getting measurable information in a short period of time. More time and more extensive fieldwork may in the future significantly widen the scope of accessible information.

Confronting the findings of this research with practitioners and researchers in the field may significantly contribute to fine-tuning the methodology of measuring local democracy. That will be the task of future projects. As far as the current one is concerned, the methodological limitations discussed above make precaution in handling the conclusions of this study a supreme imperative.